

Written Direct Testimony of Ruth Aloua

My name is Ruth Aloua and I am a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) from Kailua-Kona. I received my Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo in 2011. Three years later in 2014 I graduated from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada with a Master of Arts in Archaeology. I have worked as an archaeologist for private firms and the National Park Service. The knowledge that I gained through these experiences is implemented through community organizing and through the restoration of Kaloko Fishpond where I am a kia'i loko (fishpond guardian). When not in the fishpond or attending community meetings, I spend my time farming as an organic farmer growing a wide range of produce and raising pasture animals. My knowledge and skills range from familiarity with archaeological and anthropological practices, policies, management plans, and agencies at the county, state, and federal level, agriculture and aquaculture food production, to place-based knowledge grounded in the people, place, and culture of the Kona District.

I submit this testimony at the request of Mehana Kihoi as an expert witness. This letter describes how the arrests on Mauna a Wākea affected me spiritually, physically, and emotionally. My letter will never be able to fully convey the deep pain that lives within my heart and the shock of what has happened to me. It is a western way to convey such private emotions in public documents like so with people who belittle and are naive of our people and cultural ways.

The arrest on April 2, 2016 left me in shock and disbelief that I was arrested for attempting to stop the desecration of our sacred mountain. I remember lifting prayers as the officers approached myself and the brothers and sisters trying to protect our mountain. As they approached, we chanted and locked our arms together with love for our mountain. One-by-one, the officers ripped us apart and were most aggressive to our men. They forcefully grabbed one of my brothers, Lākea, pulling him from us and screamed at him calling him "haole" yelling, talking down to

him. The officer then grabbed Lākea from behind his neck and forcefully pulled his head forward to his face before pulling him away. The exertion of this force uncorrected by fellow officers made me feel helpless for interfering would be seen as resistance of arrest. Each of us were pulled apart and lugged to stand and and wait to be walked to the vehicles. I cried, chanting as I felt deep sorrow in my gut sick with the mistreatment of my dear brother and sisters who were standing to protect our elder. How could we stand-by and watch as machines would be readied to harm a family member? Doing nothing was not an option.

The arrest on September 9, 2015 was by far the most oppressive, offensive, and brutal attack that I have experienced in my life when the prayer circle was interrupted by Department of Land and Natural Resource officers. I remember holding hands with the other women and hearing footsteps and voices approaching followed by bright lights. While speaking in prayer I felt the officers forcefully rip our hands a part before the prayer was finished. Never before in my life had I experienced this type of trauma.

This arrest has left a spiritual wound within me that I still work on healing today. When entering into ceremonial spaces I feel afraid for my physical safety. During ceremonies, I close my eyes with total trust that those who are around me will respect my personal space seeing that I am in worship. However, after the actions of the officers, now I fear for my personal safety while in ceremony. Rather than being in fear of the general public, I am afraid of law enforcement officers and the type of actions that they will take towards myself and others around me. This has made it difficult for me to open myself fully in ceremony because I feel afraid for my personal safety and the safety of those around me.

I am also afraid that the mana (divine power) of the words, thoughts, and intentions that are lifted will be harmed by the presence and actions

of those who are not intended to be in the ceremony. The night of the arrest, the cameras and digital cameras recorded a sacred circle that should have never been recorded without being asked first. The sacred prayer we were lifting was shared on news stations and the internet. I did not have this fear before the arrest. Now, I feel like I must have a guard to protect my mana from being harmed while in ceremony.

Emotionally, after being arrested, I found myself pulling inward away from loved ones confused at the disregard that the officers had for my spirituality and practice. This removed me from relationships making it difficult to communicate the harm that I had experienced. The thought of the arrest led and still does lead me to tears. How is it that as a native person of this land I was arrested while practicing my culture in my own homelands? Sadly, this is a question and harsh reality for myself and the other women. While praying on the most sacred temple of our people where our ancestors prayed we were violently interrupted. This was an act of violence.

My charges for both arrests were dismissed by the court system. Despite the dropped charges, the State of Hawai'i, University of Hawai'i, Department of Land and Natural Resources, and Office of Mauna Kea Management have never apologized for their wrongful acts. This adds to the pain that I still feel as a native person in Hawai'i knowing that such behavior is condoned by management authorities and government officials.